

DoD leaders focus on protecting our military

By William S. Cohen
Secretary of Defense

Defense Leaders is a feature of the American Forces Press Service. It provides senior DoD leaders with an opportunity to speak directly to military service members, their families and DoD civilians on subjects of current interest.

One of the clearest responsibilities of any secretary of defense is to protect the men and women the United States deploys in harm's way around the world to safeguard our national interests. That is why I, acting on the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, decided to start vaccinating every member of the military against exposure to anthrax, a highly lethal biological agent that at least 10 countries possess in their arsenals or are in the process of acquiring.

In 1996, the Joint Chiefs of Staff identified anthrax as the number one biological threat to our troops. After the Gulf War, United Nations inspectors confirmed that Iraq had produced thousands of gallons of anthrax and deployed it in missile warheads, artillery shells and spray tanks for use from airplanes.

As a weapon of mass destruction, anthrax is cheap and much easier to develop than nuclear munitions. When dispersed in aerosol form, the colorless, odorless bacteria covers a wide area and kills people within several days of inhalation. In 1979, approximately 70 Russians died after breathing anthrax spores that escaped from a Soviet biological research facility.

Fortunately, Iraq did not use anthrax against our troops during Desert Storm in 1991, but we can't expect that future adversaries, including terrorists, would not do so. At a time when the U.S. maintains clear conventional military superiority, enemies will be tempted to turn to unconventional weapons, such as anthrax, as a way to defeat our troops.

Although anthrax is highly deadly, we have developed protective equipment and medicines to secure the safety of our troops. In 1970, the Food and Drug Administration licensed a vaccine to protect humans who might be exposed to anthrax.

This vaccine has a proven safety record over 30 years of use by thousands of veterans, woolworkers and veterinarians. Protective gear provides only temporary protection, while the vaccine constantly protects troops who might breathe anthrax spores spread on the battlefield.

After evaluating the anthrax threat and the safety of the vaccine, the general who commands U.S. troops in the Middle East requested that all troops deployed to the Arabian Gulf area be vaccinated for anthrax protection.

Every day approximately 20,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines stationed in the Gulf awake knowing that they could encounter an anthrax attack. The commander of the 37,000 U.S. troops in South Korea, who face an anthrax threat from North Korea, also requested vaccinations for his forces.

The Joint Chiefs reviewed these proposals in light of their conclusion that anthrax is the foremost biological threat to our troops. They recommended mandatory anthrax vaccination for all 2.4 million active and reserve members of our military, with the first shots going to troops in or scheduled to go to the Middle East and Korea.

They reasoned that force protection should

not be optional; just as it is inconceivable to allow a soldier to fight without a helmet, it makes little sense to send a soldier into battle without protection against a known threat like anthrax. Because our military must be able to deploy anywhere on short notice, they recommended vaccinations for all active and reserve personnel.

Before launching the vaccination program, I took steps to make sure that we were prepared.

Complaints that the Department of Defense mishandled exposure to Agent Orange and the illnesses suffered by some veterans following the Gulf War in 1991 damaged the military's credibility on medical issues.

We have worked hard to correct and learn from these experiences.

As a result, I decided to delay vaccinations until four conditions were met.

First, I ordered supplemental testing, consistent with FDA standards, to assure that the vaccine supplies are sterile, safe, potent and pure.

Second, I instructed the services to design a system that accurately tracks personnel who received the six shots required in the vaccination program.

Third, I required the services to develop plans for educating people about the program and administering the immunizations. Finally, I ordered an independent review of the health and medical protocols of the pro-

"We don't want to run the risk of losing thousands of men and women in uniform from an anthrax attack for which we are unprepared."
-William S. Cohen
SECDEF

People are highest budget priority

American Forces Press Service

Personnel issues have the highest priority in President Clinton's fiscal 2001 Defense Budget Request.

"All this great equipment we have will be unimportant if we don't have the best people to work it," said Defense Secretary William S. Cohen during a Pentagon press conference Feb. 7. "We've got to attract the best and the brightest to the military, then we've got to keep them. Quality of life issues are critically important."

The Department of Defense (DoD) budget request builds on fiscal 2000 successes, Cohen said.

The fiscal 2001 military and civilian pay raise is set for 3.7 percent. The raise is figured by taking the employment cost index and adding .5percent.

"This keeps military pay a half-a-percent above inflation," he said. But more important, DoD is adding \$3 billion to the budget to fund the basic allowance for housing.

"The BAH [increase] will eliminate out-of-pocket costs by [fiscal] 2005, and that is a significant change," Cohen said. "It will put money in the pockets of service members who currently have to come up with as much as 19 percent out-of-pocket costs in order to live in off-base housing."

Officials estimate out-of-pocket expenses will drop to an average of 15 percent in fiscal 2001. DoD will also dedicate money and resources to fixing military health care.

"TRICARE has not been managed in a way that's most desirable and most effective," Cohen said. "We will

The \$291 billion defense budget proposal will maintain the high quality of the U.S. armed forces. For quality of life and personnell issues, it includes:

• *Fiscal 2001 military and civilian pay raises are set for 3.7 percent.*

• *DoD is adding \$3 billion to the budget to fund the basic allowance for housing (with out-of-pocket expenses dropping to \$0 by 2005).*

• *Money and resources are dedicated to fixing military health care (TRICARE).*

try to establish a more seamless system where we can eliminate some of the confusion and effort that goes into filing the enrollments when service members are transferred from one jurisdiction to another. This is a goal we hope to achieve this year.

"And we certainly hope to have more access to the system by having better management practices on the part of those who are practicing medicine in our military facilities," he said.

He said the budget would eliminate co-pays for service members enrolled in TRICARE Prime who receive treatment in the civilian community.

For families enrolled in TRICARE Prime Remote, the budget eliminates co-pay for all.

Cohen said he and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Henry H. Shelton are working on proposals to provide medical care to the retired military community.

"We are still in the process of trying to come to grips with how we deal with retirees 65 and above and those on Medicare," Cohen said. "All of the options we've looked at are quite expensive but nonetheless we feel we have an obligation to address that."

Defense officials said the plans DoD is looking at could add between \$2 billion and \$8 billion per year to the defense budget depending on the option chosen.

Cohen said that overall the \$291 billion defense budget proposal protects the

President's commitment to maintain the high quality.

The budget adds money for contingencies in Kosovo and East Timor and for higher than expected fuel prices.

"We have a very large organization with serious commitments globally. We have laid the foundation, we have agreed upon the blueprints and the key building blocks are in place. We still have many tough challenges ahead," Cohen said.

The request also supports the services' efforts to reshape the force.

Cohen mentioned the Navy's proposed DD 21 multi-mission ship.

The ship will sail with fewer Sailors. Currently a comparable ship has a crew of 300. The DD 21 will sail with a crew of 100.

Cohen said the Marine Corps' V-22 aircraft will enhance the Corps' mobility.

He also mentioned Urban Warrior experiments and the importance of these on shaping the Marine Corps of the future.

Cohen has proposed two new rounds of base realignment and closure in 2003 and 2005.

He said Congress cannot afford to continue to put this off. DoD projects saving roughly \$3 billion per year if it is allowed to reduce excess infrastructure.

Planners also say that around the end of the decade DoD will have to increase the procurement budget by about \$15 billion to \$18 billion.

"That projection for procurement is going to get large and if you keep pushing (base realignment and closure) out, there's going to come a due date," Cohen said.

U.S. Naval Academy looking for enlisted applicants

By Ens. Kim Brasel,

CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The U.S. Naval Academy is looking for top quality enlisted personnel to apply for the class of 2004.

The deadline for enlisted application packages is April 1. Applicants that are accepted would enter the academy June 30.

The Secretary of the Navy can appoint up to 170 active and reserve enlisted personnel each year to the academy, with approximately 10 percent of every class entering the Naval Academy being made up of prior enlisted Sailors from the regular and reserve components of the Navy and Marine Corps.

"This is an excellent opportunity for enlisted Sailors to earn a bachelor's degree and enhance their naval career," said Vice Adm. Norb Ryan Jr., Chief of Naval Personnel. "The valuable skills and training these Sailors learned in the fleet will enhance their formal education at the academy."

Applicants may receive a direct appointments to the academy, or if academics need to be strengthened may attend the Naval Academy prep school (NAPS) at Newport, R.I., and then compete for an appointment to the Naval Academy the following year.

Some of the basic requirements to apply include:

- Not passing your 23rd birthday on July 1 of the year of admission into the Naval Academy;
- A high school grade point average of 2.8 or better and ranked in the top 30 percent of the class;
- Combined math and verbal SAT score of 1050, or combined math and verbal ACT score of 46.

For more information on requirements and criteria, see NAVADMIN 019-00, on the BUPERS web site www.bupers.navy.mil.

For more information on the United States Naval Academy go to www.usna.edu.



Around the Fleet

AK and SK ratings to merge

The Secretary of the Navy recently approved the merger of the Aviation Storekeepers (AK) and Storekeepers (SK) ratings.

Conversion from AK to SK for rated Sailors will be automatic. AK responsibilities will be included in the new SK rating. NAVADMIN 023/00 outlines the merger of the two ratings.

"The merger of AKs and SKs will allow for greater flexibility with detailing and broader career paths for Sailors," said Vice Adm. Norb Ryan Jr., Chief of Naval Personnel. "This merger will also enhance the overall quality within the ship and shore supply departments."

The conversion of AK to SK will start with E-8/E-9 personnel on a gradual basis, beginning in the spring of 2000, with the conversion expected to be finished by January

2003.

An executive committee and implementation team will meet Feb. 15-17 at the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, Ga., to establish specific milestones for the conversions.

For more information on the merger, see NAVADMIN 023/00 on the BUPERS web site www.bupers.navy.mil.

Technology brings career management closer to reservists

Navy Personnel Command (NPC) recently began a series of career management presentations to Naval Reservists nationwide, bridging the gaps of time and distance with Video Tele-Training (VTT) technology.

The presentations on retirement planning and Reserve Officer Promotion Selection Boards were telecast Feb. 5 from

Norfolk, Va. Twelve remote sites and more than 150 reservists from California to Maine plugged into this first-ever virtual linking of reserve Sailors and policy personnel.

"VTT technology permits us to meet with large groups, allowing Fleet Sailors to interact in real time with the subject matter experts," said Cmdr. Andrew Acevedo, special assistant for Reserve Officer Promotions with NPC in Millington, Tenn.

With dozens of Naval Reserve Centers and squadrons scattered throughout the United States, VTT is the perfect way to pass information to reservists on a tight training schedule.

"We can reach various groups in remote locations at one time, which saves the Navy money and multiple travel requirements," Acevedo added.

"We decided to conduct presentations on Saturdays, to catch the largest number of

reservists while they're already at their local drill sites. We transmitted from Bethesda, Md., to more than 200 Reservists on Feb. 12."

Similar presentations for enlisted reservists are being developed, and will be presented in the future.

As Sailors become more comfortable with the technology, and as VTT becomes more popular, it may be used to present other topics to active duty and reserve Sailors throughout the Fleet.

Reservists interested in the VTT Officer Selection Board and Retirement Presentation should call the Navy Personnel Command, Reserve Officer Promotions and Enlistment Advancement Branch, at DSN 882-4525, Comm. (901) 874-4525, or access the BUPERS Web Site, at <http://www.bupers.navy.mil>.